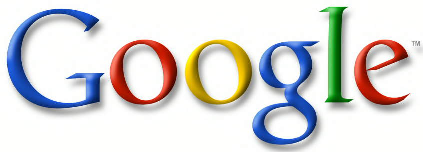

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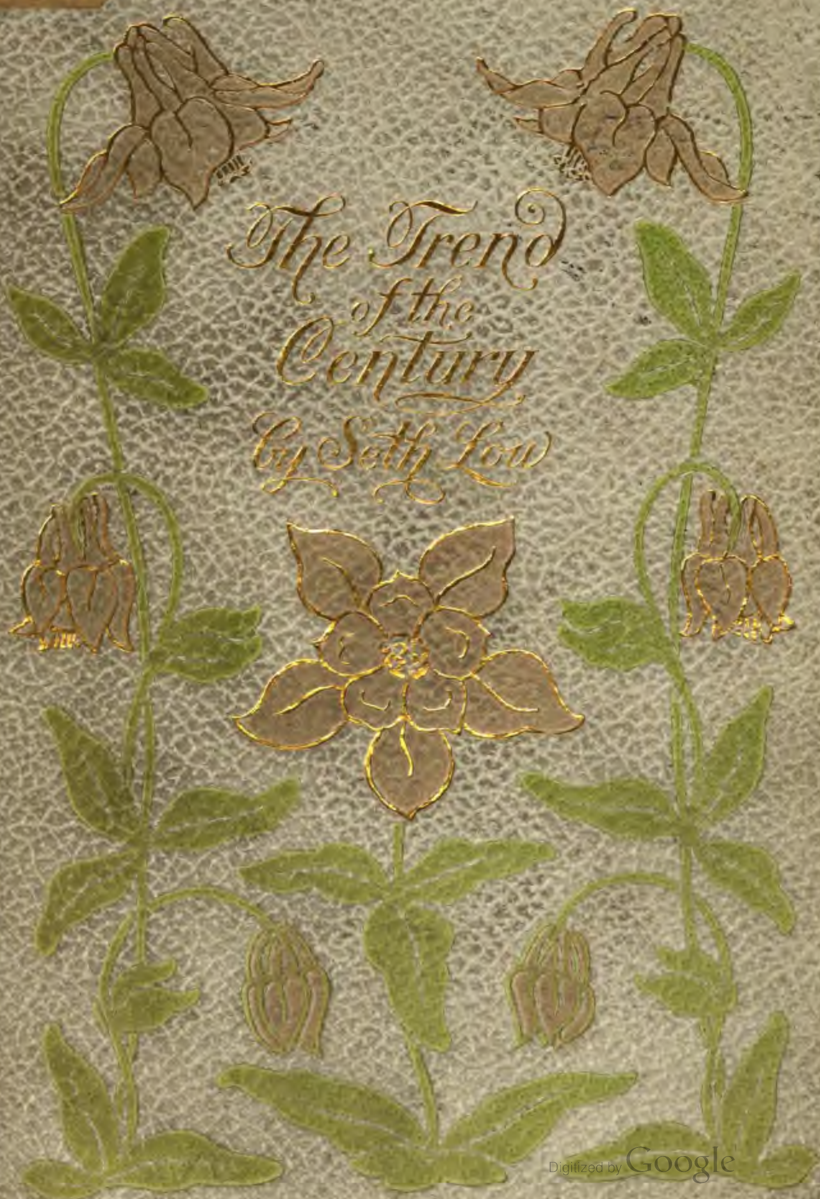

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THE TREND
OF
THE CENTURY

BY

SETH LOW
PRESIDENT OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

FOURTH THOUSAND

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ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE HARVARD CHAPTER OF THE PHI BETA KAPPA,

IN SANDERS THEATRE, JUNE 30, 1898,

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THE TREND OF THE CENTURY.

Every century has its own characteristics. The two influences which have made the nineteenth century what it is seem to me to be the scientific spirit and the democratic spirit. Thus, the nineteenth century, singularly enough, is the great interpretative century both of nature and of the past, and at the same time the century of incessant and uprooting change in all that relates to the current life of men. It is also the century of national systems of popular education, and at the same time of nation-great armies; the century that has done more than any other to scatter men over the face of the earth, and to concentrate them in cities; the century of a universal suffrage that is based upon a belief in the inherent value of the individual; and the century of the corporation and the labor union, which in the domain of capital and of labor threaten to obliterate the individual. I want to trace, if I can, what has been the trend of this remarkable century in the domain of thought, of society, of commerce, of industry, and of politics. Especially I want to do this as it concerns life in the United States.

I speak first of the trend of thought; for thought, immaterial though it be, is the matrix that shapes the issues of life. The mind has been active in all fields during this fruitful century; but, outside of politics, it is

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to science that we must look for the thoughts that have shaped all other thinking. When Von Helmholtz was in this country, a few years ago, he said that modern science was born when men ceased to summon nature to the support of theories already formed, and instead began to question nature for her facts, in order that they might thus discover the laws which these facts reveal. I do not know that it would be easy to sum up the scientific method, as the phrase runs, in simpler words.

It would not be correct to say that this process was unknown before the present century; for there have been individual observers and students of nature in all ages. The seed idea is to be found at least as far back as the time of Bacon, not to say of Aristotle. But it is true that only in this century has this attitude toward nature become the uniform attitude of men of science. The results that have flowed from this general attitude toward nature have been so wonderful that the same method has been employed by students of other subjects, with results hardly less noteworthy. To this attitude toward nature on the part of men of science we owe the great advances in our knowledge of natural law which this century has witnessed; and from this increased knowledge of natural law the manifold inventions have come that have changed the face of the world. To the scientific method applied to the problems of the past by men of letters, we owe our ability to understand the hieroglyphs of Egypt and the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylonia.

One of the chief results of the scientific method as applied to nature and the study of the past is the change that it has wrought in the philosophic conception of nature and of human society. By the middle of the

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century, Darwin had given what has been held to be substantial proof of the theory of the development of higher forms out of lower in all living things; and since then the doctrine of evolution, not as a body of exact teaching, but as a working theory, has obtained a mastery over the minds of men which has dominated all their studies and all their thinking. The consequences of the doctrine have been very different in different fields of mental activity. In the field of religious thought it has undoubtedly been a source of very serious perplexity, because it has confronted men with the necessity of reshaping their conceptions of the divine method of creation according to a theory exactly the opposite of that which had been previously held. When Copernicus, in the sixteenth century, began to teach that the earth revolved about the sun, it must have seemed to be doctrine that disputed the most evident of facts. All men in all ages had seen the sun rise in the east and set in the west, and therefore the new doctrine must have appeared, at first sight, to be utterly subversive both of the science of that day and of the religion of that day. The men of science, then as now, easily accommodated themselves to the new teaching as its truthfulness became clear, despite its revolutionary character; for to them it meant only a fresh start along a more promising road. But the opposition of the Church reveals the agony of mind that was involved for the Christian believer in the effort to restate his conception of man's importance in the sight of God, from the point of view of the newly recognized truth instead of from the point of view of the old error. Still, men were able to do this, though it took them a long time to do it. The discovery of Copernicus was announced

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in 1543; yet I read the other day, in the life of Samuel Johnson, the first president of King's College in New York city, that it was by him and his colleagues of Yale, in the early part of the eighteenth century, that even the learned people of Connecticut were led to accept the Copernican theory of the universe instead of the Ptolemaic. Indeed, so late as the first Commencement of King's College, in 1758, one of the students, "in a clear and concise manner, demonstrated the revolution of the earth round the sun, both from astronomical observations and the theory of gravity, and defended the thesis against two of his classmates." These incidents illustrate happily how far America was from Europe in those days. It is easy to believe, therefore, that the evolutionary conception of creation, with its sublime suggestion of the limitless possibilities of endless development, will in time be accepted as the basis of men's religious thinking as universally as religious men now accept the Copernican system of the universe. In the mean while, it should be a source of comfort to every man whose mind has been troubled by this new teaching of science that, in this experience, nothing has happened to him which has not happened before; and it may be observed that if the man of science has thus taught, in a new way, that man is allied to the beasts that perish, he has also shown, by his own wide reading of natural law, that man is capable of tracing the processes of the infinite, thus setting the seal of science to the doctrine of revelation, that man, in his essence, is the child of God.

The effects of the scientific method and of the doctrine of evolution upon philosophy, during the century, has been to bring the philosopher and the man of science

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closer together. In ancient times, the philosopher was in his own person a man of science; that is to say, he not only knew all of the science that was known, but he was himself the principal agent in advancing man's scientific knowledge. Through the centuries, as man's knowledge of nature has increased, one science after another has been set aside from the domain of philosophy, so to speak, as a field apart. Thus, astronomy, physics, and chemistry have long been recognized as independent fields of knowledge; and the philosopher has left it to the astronomer, the physicist, and the chemist to enlarge man's knowledge in those fields. During the nineteenth century, even psychology has become, to a great extent, an experimental science, so that philosophy, in our day, has come to concern itself once more with all knowledge rather than with special fields of knowledge. Accordingly, we find the greatest philosophers basing their philosophies upon the widest possible survey of facts; and the greatest scientists turning from their facts to account for them, as they may, by some adequate philosophy. Thus, the theory of evolution, resting as it does upon the observed facts of nature, has come to dominate the philosophy of the century no less than its science.

In the domain of education one sees the same philosophy at work, having for its handmaid the democratic tendency which has marked the political development of the century. Every public educational system of our day, broadly speaking, is the child of the nineteenth century. The educational system of Germany, which in its results has been of hardly less value to mankind than to Germany itself, dates from the reconstitution of the German universities after the battle of Jena.

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Whatever system France may have had before the Revolution went down in the cataclysm that destroyed the ancient régime, so that the educational system of France also dates from the Napoleonic period. In the United States, while the seeds of the public school system may have been planted in the eighteenth, or perhaps even in the seventeenth century, it has only been in the nineteenth century, with the development of the country, that our public school system has grown into what we now see; while in England, the system of national education, in a democratic sense, must be dated from 1870. This attempt on the part of the great nations to provide systematic instruction for the people, from childhood to manhood, from the elementary school to the university, reflects, as it seems to me, the commingling of the two great tendencies of the century, the democratic and the evolutionary. Out of the growth of the democratic principle has come the belief that it is worth while to educate all the children of the state; and out of the scientific method, which has led to the general acceptance of the evolutionary theory, has been developed the advance in educational method which is so marked a feature of the last decades of the century. Formerly, it was satisfactory to educate a child according to some preconceived theory, or as it had always been done. To-day, the best systems of education are increasingly based upon the laboratory method, and upon the observation of facts relating to childhood and youth. The new disciplines, also, are freely admitted on even terms with the old.

In other domains of knowledge, such as history and literature, the application of the scientific method has resulted not only in the overthrow of many of our pre-

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conceived conceptions in regard to the past, but also in the opening up of vast fields of information which formerly were closed to the seeker after truth, because he did not command the open sesame to their treasures. I think, therefore, the statement is justified which I made at the beginning of this paper, that it is to science we must look for the thoughts which, in the nineteenth century, have dominated and fructified all other thinking. The illumination of the century has proceeded from that source, and the light that has been shed, especially by the study of nature, has been carried into every nook and corner of human history and human life.

But the consequences of the general scientific attitude toward nature which is characteristic of this century have been twofold. Not only has the scientific method furnished a philosophy of nature and of human life, but, by the great increase in man's knowledge of natural law to which it has led, it has resulted in endless inventions, and these, in turn, have changed the face of the world. It is not my purpose to catalogue these inventions,—not even the most conspicuous of them. I rather want to point out some of the changes in the life of society which have been caused by them. One of the most noticeable of these results is the great increase in the number and size of cities. What the elevator is to the high building the railroad and steamboat are to the city. They make practicable a city such as without them could not be. In striking contrast with this tendency of people to concentrate in cities, we observe, on the other hand, a world movement of people which has been facilitated by the same inventions. Man's knowledge of the earth that he inhabits has been made substantially complete during the present

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century, and the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea have been brought into rapid and easy communication with the centres of the world's life. In other ages, tribes often migrated from one part of the world to another. The path by which they went was stained with blood, and the country of which they took possession they made their own by violence and conquest. But in this century, millions of people, not as tribes, but as families and as individuals, have migrated peacefully from Europe to America, to Australia, to Asia, and to Africa. This world-wide movement of the peoples has been made possible only by the inventions that have, on the other hand, built up the cities; but it reflects, also, as it seems to me, the influence of the democratic spirit urging men, in vast numbers and upon their own responsibility, always to seek for conditions of life in which they may enter upon life's struggle less handicapped by the past.

The rapid march of invention during the century has been coincident with one far-reaching and progressive change in the habits of society, the importance of which is seldom recognized. I refer to deposit banking. Of all the agencies that have affected the world in the nineteenth century, I am sometimes inclined to think that this is one of the most influential. If deposit banking may not be said to be one fruit of democracy, it certainly may be said that it is in those countries in which democracy is most dominant that deposit banking thrives best. One of the first banks in the United States was the Bank of Maryland, opened in Baltimore in 1790. It was opened for a year before it had a depositor. Even fifty years ago the discussions of bankers turned mainly upon circulation. Comparatively little atten-

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tion was given to the question of deposits. At the present time our banks comparatively are indifferent to circulation; but they aim to secure as large deposits as possible. Deposit banking does for the funds of a country precisely what mobilization does for the army of a country like France. Mobilization there places the entire manhood of the country in readiness for war. Deposit banking keeps every dollar of the country on a war-footing all the time. Some one has said that it would have been of no use to have invented the railroad at an earlier period of the world's history, for there would not have been money enough at command to make the invention available before this modern banking-system has made its appearance. If this be so, then indeed the part that has been played by deposit-banking in the developments of the century cannot be over-estimated.

During the century the conditions of the world's commerce have been radically altered. It is not simply that the steamboat and the locomotive have taken the place of the sailing-ship and the horse; that the submarine cable has supplanted the mails; nor even that these agencies have led to such improvements in banking-facilities that foreign commerce is done, for the most part, for hardly more than a brokerage upon the transaction. These are merely accidents of the situation. The fundamental factors have been the opening up of virgin soil in vast areas to the cultivation of man, and the discovery of how to create artificial cold, which makes it possible to transport for long distances produce that only a few years ago was classed as perishable. The net result of these influences has been to produce a world competition at every point of the globe,

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both on a scale never before known, and as regards articles that have been heretofore exempt from all competition except neighborhood competition. Thus, not only has it become impossible to raise wheat profitably in England or even on our own Atlantic coast, but the price of such an article as butter, for example, is fixed in the State of New York by what it costs to produce a similar grade of butter in Australia. Under the influence of these changes, the merchant of the early part of the century has become "as extinct as the mastodon."

But if these changes have introduced new and strange problems for the merchant, they have also presented to the statesman problems of no less difficulty. In the first half of the century, China was the great source of supply for both tea and silk. At the present time more than half of the tea consumed in England comes from India and Ceylon, and more than three-quarters of the tea consumed in the United States comes from the island of Formosa and from Japan. Even in silk China has largely lost her market to Japan and Europe. Who shall say that this gradual destruction of China's export trade has not had much to do with bringing the ancient empire to the point where it seems about to be broken up? The outflow from the old empire is not sufficient to stem the inflow; and the aggressive commerce of the outside world appears to be ready to break down the ancient barriers and overflow the country, whether it will or no.

This unification of the world, and its reduction in size from the point of view of commerce, reveal some tendencies that are full of interest. The general tendency to protection was the first answer of the statesman and of the nations to the pressure of competition

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from new quarters. It represented an effort to make the terms of the world competition between young countries and old, between old countries and new, somewhat more even. The remarkable exception to this tendency presented by Great Britain reflects the exceptional situation of Great Britain among the nations. Her home domain is too small to furnish occupation for either her men or her money, and therefore the people of the little island have swarmed all over the world. As a consequence, Great Britain's commercial policy is, in sense, a world policy; but it is noticeable that the other great nations, whether young or old, being obliged to frame their policy from a different point of view, have hitherto relied, with few if any exceptions, upon protection to equalize the terms of the competition. Now, however, a second tendency appears to be discernible. If protection represents the attempt of a nation to hold itself aloof, to some extent, from the competition of the world, the tendency of the aggressive nations of Europe to divide up among themselves the undeveloped portions of the earth, and even the territory of weaker nations, seems to me to represent a growing conviction that the policy of protection, from its nature, must be a temporary one, and also to reveal a dimly recognized belief that the true way for the old countries to contend with the semi-civilized, in the long run, is to raise the standard of living in the less advanced countries, so that the semi-civilized shall not be able to drag the most highly developed peoples down to their own level. That is to say, if the first response of the civilized nations to the world competition to which I have referred has been the attempt to limit its un-

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welcome effects by the erection of artificial barriers at every custom-house, the second response seems likely to come in the effort of the strong nations to dominate the weak, — not for their destruction, but for their uplifting. In other words, civilization, being brought face to face with the competition of the semi-civilized, appears to believe that the best way to preserve its own integrity is to introduce the conditions of civilization everywhere. If this be a correct diagnosis of the recent developments of foreign policy on the part of several of the great nations, it indicates a disposition to secure protection in the future by aggressive, rather than by defensive action as heretofore. I am not discussing the merits of the case, but only trying to point out the possible significance of movements that are likely to have no little influence on the future.

But we should lose sight of one of the most important factors that have been at work in producing these results, and in changing the life of men, if we did not consider for a moment the influence of invention in the great domain of industry. In its relation to agriculture this influence appears in three forms: there has been a much more intelligent application of chemistry to the cultivation of the soil; steam-power has been very largely substituted for hand-power; and the railroad has made accessible vast areas of country which, in any previous age of the world, it would have been impossible to cultivate profitably. In the substitution of machinery for hand-power in the domain of manufacture, two incidental results have proved of far-reaching importance, although neither was necessarily involved in the substitution of the machine for the hand. I refer, first, to the division of labor, and second, to the interchangeability

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of parts in many standard manufactured articles. It has added enormously to the productiveness of a factory to divide the labor employed according to the processes. By this means the labor becomes more expert, the product is increased, and the quality is improved. It is true that the action of the laborer thereby becomes also, to a great extent, automatic; but so does the execution of the skilled musician, as the result of his practice and his skill. Does this automatic character of the occupation tend to the belittling or the enlargement of the minds of the working-men? It is probable that the mind of the laborer, thus largely set free during his hours of toil, is at work quite as busily as before, and in ways that make him more than ever an active factor in the world's life. The practice of making interchangeable parts in many manufactured articles has also added greatly to the convenience and availability of such articles. The standardizing of the threads of screws, the sizes of bolts, and the like, adds beyond measure to the effectiveness of manufacture and to the convenience of industry. But it is a superficial view of these things to suppose that their effect is exhausted in a tendency to cheapen products and to improve industrial opportunity. It is evident that division of labor is permanently possible under freedom only in communities the members of which are animated by mutual trustfulness and mutual respect. Interchangeable parts are of value only when men trade continually with one another. They involve a recognition of the advantage to be had by considering the general welfare rather than simply one's own convenience. That is to say, both of these things reveal and emphasize the tendency to democracy in industry, which seems to me as marked a feature of our times as

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the tendency to democracy in the political life of men. In other words, industry rests more and more completely upon the mutual interdependence of the masses of mankind.

Other changes, less material, have taken place in the commercial and industrial world during this same great century. The wage-system has become universal, and the corporation and the trade-union have become dominant in many branches of industry and commerce. Commodore Vanderbilt laid the foundation of his fortune by operating a small boat on a ferry. The business of transportation grew under his hands to such an extent that even so exceptionally able a man as he could not control it in his own person. Under the form of a corporation, he was obliged to associate with himself many others, in order to carry on the immense business which he developed. The corporation in this aspect, therefore, is democratic, resting as it does upon the substitution of the ownership of many for the ownership of one. It may, indeed, be said that the corporation is oligarchic rather than democratic; but the oligarchic tendency in society made corporations even for general business purposes that rested upon exclusive privilege. The corporations of our day seem to me democratic, except as they control exclusive public franchises, in that they are open to all, and must compete with all. A sailing-ship used to cost comparatively little, and many an individual could afford to have one or two or a small fleet of them. The modern steamship, on the other hand, is exceedingly costly; and there would be few of them indeed if there were no more than could be owned by individuals. But just as in political democracy there is a tendency on the part of the many blindly

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to follow one, so in corporations one man is apt to determine the efficiency or inefficiency of the corporation. Similarly, in the trade-union and other organizations of labor, the organizations which are the most capably led are the most effective.

The corporation and the trade-union interest me especially from another point of view, because of the strange contrast they present to the democratic tendencies of the times. Democracy, as a political theory, emphasizes the equality of men and the equal rights and privileges of all men before the law. The tendency of it has been, in this country, to develop in multitudes of men great individuality and self-reliance. Side by side with this tendency, however, we see the corporation supplanting the individual capitalist, and the trade-union obliterating the individual laborer, as direct agents in the work of the world. Strange as this contrast is, both tendencies must be consistent with democracy, for the corporation and the trade-union flourish more where democracy is most developed. Indeed, they seem to be successful and powerful just because democracy pours into them both its vital strength. The criticisms that are justly enough launched against both, probably spring largely from the fact that, by reason of the rapidity of their development, men have not yet learned how to control them so as to secure the maximum of benefit and the minimum of abuse.

In this country, I suppose, there are few who would deny that the corporate form of doing business is not only inevitable, but on the whole advantageous. At the same time, the opinion undoubtedly would be almost as universal that the abuses in corporate management confront the country with some of the most serious prob-

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lems that lie before it. The impersonality of the corporation lends itself readily to many abuses from which the sense of personal responsibility saves individual men. The corporation, being a creature of legislation, as it has gradually aquired control of more and more of the field of business, has brought all business into relation with the legislator, which is as unfortunate as possible. When business was in private control, legislators interfered comparatively little, because those who conducted the business had votes. Corporations, however, have no votes, but they have money; and it is not exaggeration to say that the people fear, if they do not believe, that the money of the corporations is often more influential in shaping legislation than are the votes of the people. The statement of a railroad magnate, that in Republican counties he was a Republican, and in Democratic counties he was a Democrat, but that everywhere he was for the railroad, was the cynical admission of an attitude easily understood, but none the less dangerous. When one tries to devise remedies for the evident dangers of the situation, it is not easy to be precise. It is possible, I think, to indicate some directions in which to look for improvement, so far as improvement is possible outside of higher standards of public virtue. The fundamental evil in the corporate form of management, undoubtedly, is the loss of personal responsibility. It is a common remark, that as directors men will do things which as individuals they would not think of doing. Indeed, the evil lies deeper than this. Because they are directors, and therefore, as they say, trustees for others, they feel constrained to do for the benefit of the stockholders what as individuals they abhor. This reasoning may well be considered fallacious,

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but that it is very influential in determining the action of corporate directors cannot be questioned. The remedy for this loss of personal responsibility, so far as there is any remedy by legislation, must come from publicity. When the legislator grants the impersonal form for the conduct of business, and grants, in addition, a limited liability, there is no reason why it should not, at the same time, demand that all of the operations of this artificial person — or perhaps I ought to say, of this combination of natural and privileged persons — should be matters of public record. Theoretically I cannot believe that there is any reason why the demand for publicity in relation to the actions of corporations should not be carried to any detail to which it may be necessary to carry it in order to secure the result of absolute honesty as towards stockholders, creditors, and the public. It should be observed, perhaps, that corporations naturally divide themselves into two classes, — those which exercise, by virtue of a public franchise, quasi-governmental functions, and those which conduct purely private business. I think the same rule of publicity, as a general principle, should apply to both kinds of corporations; but it is evident that publicity may have to be carried much farther in regard to the first kind than in regard to the second.

I think there is one other direction in which corporations can be further controlled to the public advantage. In many of the States, already, it is impossible to organize a corporation without paying in the capital in cash. If this requirement could be extended so as to demand that neither stock nor bonds should be issued except for a cash equivalent, it would strike at the root of one of the evils incident to corporate management which has

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done much to arouse against corporations popular indignation. I do not know why the law might not require, where stock or bonds are to be issued as the equivalent of invested property, patents, good-will, and the like, that the valuation upon which such issues may be made should be fixed by public authority. The corporation that means to serve the public honestly and fairly is not likely to object to being required to have assets of full value for all the securities which it offers to the public. It is the corporation which wishes to make money out of the public dishonestly that aims to float all manner of securities that have no value at all, or only a nominal value. I believe it to be a righteous demand that the laws regulating corporations should protect the public much more adequately than they do now against such frauds.

But while it is evident that the corporate form of conducting business has been of wide benefit to mankind, despite the abuses that have attached to it, there may not be such general admission of the truth that the trade-union and the labor organization have been equally beneficial. It is sometimes said that labor organizes because capital does, and that it is obliged to do so in self-defence. I am far from saying that there is no truth in this statement, but I think that it is only a partial statement of the truth. Labor organizes, primarily, not simply to contend against capital and for self-defence, but for precisely the same reason that capital does; that is, for its own advantage. It organizes in response to a tendency of the times which labor can resist no more than capital. It is the recognition by labor of the vision of the poet, that "the individual withers, and the world is more and more." It may not

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be denied that organized labor has often been cruel in its attitude to laboring-men who wish to work upon an individual basis; but it cannot be justly said that it is more cruel than organized capital has been in its own field. The individual competitor has been removed from the pathway of the trust as remorselessly as the individual laborer has been deprived of work by the labor organization. Indeed, I think it may be said that there is no fault that can be charged against organized labor which may not be charged with equal truth against organized capital. The forms in which these faults exhibit themselves, from the nature of the case, are different; but in both instances the faults are the same. In the mean while, one has only to consider the protectionist policy of nations, in order to be able to understand the protectionist policy of the trade-unions. No laboring-man can tell at what moment a new invention will appear which will deprive him of his livelihood. It is inevitable, at such a time, that men should draw together, and present a common front to the problems of life, rather than attempt to contend with them as individual atoms. It is evident, also, that in many directions the trade-union has improved the condition of the laboring-man, looked at from the point of view of the mass. It seems to me that the true line of development, instead of antagonizing the organization of labor, is to endeavor to make it responsible, so as to substitute for the irresponsibility of the single laborer the adequate responsibility of the great body of laborers. I have been told that in the most progressive labor-unions of England, where the question is an older one than it is here, the aim of the union is to determine by joint action and by agreement with the employers the conditions under which the

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trade shall be carried on, while the tendency is to be indifferent whether the person employed is in the union or out of the union, provided that the standard regulations thus established for the trade are observed upon both sides. Under such a policy the war of the union is waged against inequitable conditions of life, and not against individual laborers who happen to be outside of the union. It is easy to understand that the employer would prefer to have all such matters entirely under his own control; but it is probably true that, under the complex conditions of modern life, this is no longer absolutely possible anywhere; and it is also probably true that, by a general recognition of this circumstance, the standard of living may be raised in any community, to the great benefit of all concerned.

The tendency to democracy in politics is unquestionably the dominant political fact of the century. Not to attempt to trace the operation of this tendency everywhere, it seems to show itself not only in the wide extension of the suffrage in such countries as England and the United States, but also in the nation-wide army of Germany. It is true that there is little enough of the free spirit of democracy in a military system like that of Germany. On the other hand, the universal suffrage existing in Germany for the election of members of the Reichstag, and the universal demand of the state for military service from all its people, are both of them instances of the use of the democratic spirit of the times in the service of a different polity. In other words, outside of Russia, and possibly even there, monarchical government in Europe is obliged to depend for its support upon the great body of the nation, instead of upon the power of the great and the noble. In

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England the monarchy, although it retains the forms and expressions of power that were natural in the time of the Tudors, has become so responsive to the demands of the democracy as to give, in effect, a democratic government. In the United States the century, though it began with a limited suffrage, ends with universal manhood suffrage, and even with woman suffrage in some of the Western States. There is one essential difference, however, which ought never to be forgotten, between the democracy of the United States and the democracy of England. The struggle of democracy in England for centuries has been to convert a government of privilege into a modern democracy. This implies a hereditary disposition on the part of the great body of the people to look up to men of education and position as natural leaders, — a tendency which still remains to temper very importantly all the activities of English public life. In the United States there is no such tendency. Hence the problem of democracy here is to learn how to educate itself to higher standards, and therefore to the attainment of better results. In other words, democracy in the United States is building on hard-pan, and every advance gained is an advance that reveals the education of the whole people up to a higher level. Undoubtedly, universal suffrage and the large immigration of people without any experience in self-government have given form to many of our problems; but I often think there is far too great a disposition among us to magnify the difficulties which these conditions present. If all our failures be admitted, whatever they are, the history of the United States is certainly a marvellous one. Surely it is bad philosophy to assume that our history is what it is in despite of,

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and not because of, our democracy. It is a notable fact that hardly an immigrant who remains in this country long enough to become a citizen is willing to return to live in his own home. This is a striking testimony to the fact that, whatever our shortcomings, the average conditions of life are freer and happier here than anywhere else in the world. And our institutions have certainly sufficed to produce people of the very highest average of intelligence.

The fact is, in my judgment, that our problems arise not so much from universal suffrage as from the effect of the multiplication table applied to all the problems of life. I recollect that Mr. James Bryce, when in this country a few years ago, delivered an interesting lecture which he entitled "An Age of Discontent." In the lecture he pointed out that during the early part of this century the great desire of men was for political liberty. But when political liberty had been obtained, he said, instead of ushering in an epoch of universal good-will, it had brought with it apparently only universal discontent. Allowing the statement to pass unchallenged, I should be inclined to say, first of all, if I were to try to suggest an explanation of the prevailing discontent, that a partial explanation, at least, can be found in the immense increase of popular opportunity that is due to the spread of democracy, and which has resulted in so magnifying every problem that the world has not yet learned how to deal with many of them. The problems are not only new; in scale they are thoroughly in keeping with the times, for nothing is more characteristic of the age than the large units of its enterprise. A single building to-day will hold as many tenants as a block of buildings in the beginning of the century; a

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single bridge of our time will cost as much as twenty bridges of the earlier day; and so one might go through the entire catalogue of private and public undertakings. But size often makes simple things difficult. Any one building a house in the country, when he has dug a well has solved the problem of his water supply; but to supply water for a great city calls for the outlay of millions of dollars, and for the employment of the best engineering talent in the land. Yet nothing has happened except that the problem has been magnified. Thus it is clear that the difficulties created by the multiplication table are real; so that the very enlargement of opportunity that democracy has brought with it has faced democracy with problems far harder than were formerly presented to any government.

Another cause of the prevailing discontent, if that be taken for granted, I find in the constant and uprooting changes in life that have been incident to the rapid progress of scientific invention in our day, and from which no class of people have been exempt. The unrest is so general and so world-wide that it is not surprising that men are seeking to find for it some remedy which, by its thoroughness, seems to give promise of a complete cure. Every one is conscious of the new problems, but no one is wise enough to see how they are to be worked out. Men want a universal panacea. Accordingly, the anarchist and the nihilist say that all government, or even society itself, is a failure; that the thing to do is to destroy the foundations of government or of society as they now exist and to start fresh. The communist, less radical, says that society is not at fault, but that the institution of private property is the source of all trouble. If communism could be introduced, and the

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people could own everything in common, then, he thinks, the inequalities and injustices of life would disappear. The socialist, on the other hand, recognizing the fallacy of both claims, says, No, that is not the trouble. The state, as the one pre-eminently democratic corporation of the day, ought to control the instruments of industry and commerce. When these are controlled by the state, for the general good, instead of being held as now for private advantage, then a better day will be ushered in. And so it goes. It cannot be gainsaid that under every form of government the times are trying men's souls in every condition of life; but there is no universal panacea. There is nothing to be done but patiently to meet each problem as it comes, in the best way possible, in the confidence that in the long run the outcome will be advantageous to mankind. This, at all events, I think may be said of our own people and of their equipment for the problems of the times: that the American people, in great crises, by their self-control, by their willingness to make sacrifices, and by their evident honesty of purpose, have gladdened the hearts of their friends, and have encouraged those who love to believe that mankind is worthy of trust. That our country has not perfectly learned the art of self-government goes without saying; but that it has made progress in many and difficult directions I think must also be admitted.

In the mean while, some of the problems of greatest difficulty are those which come simply from our size. Merely to get out the vote of a great city, or of a State, or of the nation requires so much machinery as to give to the machine in politics a power that does not always make for the public good. It is not surprising, therefore, that wherever this problem is greatest, as in the

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large cities and the large States, there the tendency to the control of the machine by one man, and to the control of the government by one man through his control of the machine, is the most evident. It does not yet fully appear how the country is to secure the legitimate results now obtained through the party machines, without paying to the machines, as such, a price which is out of all proportion to the value of their services. It is not to be believed, however, for one moment, that the wisdom and patriotism of the future will be any less equal to the solution of our problems than the wisdom and patriotism of the past have been. It is apparent that the power of the machine, in the last statement, lies in its control of the power to nominate, because the control of that power opens or closes for every man the door to public life. In some way, it must be made easier for men whose aim is simply to serve the public to get into public life and to stay in it without loss of self-respect. The many movements toward primary reform which look to regaining for the people the control of nominations are movements in the right direction. It is evident that the public instinct has recognized the source of the difficulty, and that everywhere men are at work trying to find a remedy for the evils of which they have become aware. The saying, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," did not originate in our day. We are conscious of our own shortcomings and of our own difficulties, and we are apt to forget those out of which the world has grown. We have only to remember these things to gain heart. In a single word, I believe the problem of good government, in our day and country, is largely a problem of education; and in this view it is interesting to recall what was pointed

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out not long ago by Dr. Stanley Hall, that education is the one thing as to the value of which all men everywhere, at the present time, are agreed. Not that there is agreement on the methods and detail of education; but all men are agreed that education is a thing to be encouraged, a thing to be desired, a thing to be struggled for, and a thing to profit by. In this education our universities have a large part to play. They are already doing much in the direction of a constructive study of politics and of society. Perhaps they are not doing enough in the direction of the constructive study of industry and commerce, for in an industrial and commercial age both political and social questions are largely shaped by commerce and industry. In economics, the work of the universities is largely critical, not to say destructive; but because of their ability to illuminate the problems of the present with a broad knowledge of what is being done the world over, as well as with the knowledge of the past, and because of their own inherent democracy of spirit which puts them in vital touch with the spirit of the times, I am confident that they may, if they will, make valuable contributions to such a study of industry and commerce as will cause the universities to become still more important factors in shaping the future of the country.

To sum up, therefore, I should say that the trend of the century has been to a great increase in knowledge, which has been found to be, as of old, the knowledge of good and evil; that this knowledge has become more and more the property of all men rather than of a few; that as a result, the very increase of opportunity has led to the magnifying of the problems with which humanity is obliged to deal; and that we find ourselves, at the end

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of the century, face to face with problems of world-wide importance and utmost difficulty, and with no new means of coping with them other than the patient education of the masses of men. However others may tremble as they contemplate the perplexities of the coming century, the children of the universities should find it easy to keep heart; for they know that higher things have been developed in pain and struggle out of lower since creation began; and in the atmosphere of the university, with its equality of privilege and wealth of opportunity open to all, they must have learned, if they have learned anything of value, the essential nobility of the democratic spirit that so surely holds the future in its hands, — the spirit that seeks, with the strength of all, to serve all and uplift all.

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